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Paper presentation abstract submission

Title: Exploring the embodied basis of political discourse and the use of figurative language

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Presentation summary:

This study investigates the shared bodily schemas of political parties by analyzing the discursive constructions in five British political party manifestos from the 2010 general election campaign. First, a computerized content analysis identified that the manifestos of the BNP, the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats had higher frequencies of barrier imagery than the Conservative and Labour Parties. Second, a computerized and manual analysis demonstrated that the BNP, the Greens and the Liberal Democrats showed a tendency to construct blame discourses that reflected a polarization between a “good” self and a culpable “bad” other social group. In such discourses, the hard shell of the barrier imagery may function as a double image for rigid political boundaries and dichotomous differentiations (Chilton, 2005). By contrast, the remaining political parties employed solution-focused discourses that recognized conflicting interests between social groups. Special attention is given to the use of figurative language that underpins the political discourses and political ideologies.

Presentation request: Projector and computer

Brief presenter biography:

Laura Cariola is a PhD student at Lancaster University investigating the static and dynamic relations among primordial thought, body boundary awareness and affect regulation in spoken and written texts.

Introduction

The present study explores the embodied basis of the discursive construction and ideological presentation of the “self” and the “other” in five political manifestos of the 2010 political campaign. Although the notion of embodiment has not been investigated within the domain of (critical) discourse analysis, Chilton (1996, 2005) proposed that the metaphorical BODY AS A CONTAINER schema functions as a double image of rigid political categories and social membership as well as manifesting a fear of penetration. Additionally, it was predicted that political manifestos with stronger body boundary schemas would construct blame-discourses in which one’s own “good” social group would be represented as victims of another “bad” social group who are positioned as the cause of political and economic issues, such as the debt crisis, unemployment and immigration (Tennen & Affleck 1990). By contrast, political parties with weaker body boundary schemas would engage in solution-focused discourses that acknowledge conflicting interests between social groups (Romer et al., 1997). Particular attention is focused on the use of figurative language that underpins the political discourses and ideologies.

Method

The entire texts of five political party manifestos from the 2010 election were analyzed in this study: the BNP, the Green Party, the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, and the Liberal Democrats. All manifestos shared common themes such as an introduction to the political party’s ideological disclosure followed by political recommendations relating to everyday life, the economy, the environment and national interests. Particularly, the manifestos focused on the current economic crisis.

The texts were divided into equal text segments (250 words each) (Kilgariff, 1996). The computerized Body Type Dictionary (BTD) (Wilson, 2006) was then applied to all texts to calculate the frequency of semantic items that are classified to measure bodily protectiveness, i.e., barrier lexis (such as ‘covered’, ‘hidden’ and ‘shell’) and vulnerability, i.e., penetration lexis (such as ‘bleeding’, ‘entrance’ or ‘hole’).

Results

The descriptive statistics show that the BNP, Green Party and Liberal Democrats used higher frequencies of barrier lexis, creating stronger body boundaries than the Conservatives and the Labour Party. The BNP and the Green party also showed a lower frequency of penetration lexis, demonstrating a lower bodily vulnerability compared to the other political parties (see Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of body boundary imagery in the political manifestos

	Approx. text length in words	Barrier		Penetration	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
BNP	29,335	2.24	1.58	1.36	1.29
Conservatives	27,852	1.63	1.59	1.87	1.54
Greens	18,357	2.00	1.69	1.48	1.44
Labour	29,823	1.91	1.71	1.82	1.40
Liberal Democrats	18,833	2.16	1.37	1.84	1.48

A computerized analysis (Rayson, 2009) identified the ten most frequently used keywords in the political manifestos to explore the discursive foci that vary among the political parties (see Table 2). Subsequent computerized and manual analyses also identified figurative expressions that underpin the political discourses and ideologies.

Table 2

Ten most frequent keywords in the political manifestos of British political parties in comparison to the other parties

BNP	Conservatives	Greens	Labour	Liberal Democrats
BNP (385)	We (707)	Green Party (55)	We (681)	Liberal Democrat/s (94)
Shall (117)	Conservative (60)	Would (125)	Care (70)	Fair (66)
The (2251)	Will (657)	Item (18)	Next (48)	You (50)
British (178)	Government (149)	Page (16)	Will (660)	Your (43)
Which (200)	Give (77)	In particular (20)	Continue (51)	Works (15)
Muslim (39)	Labour (73)	Equal (21)	New (169)	Money (36)
Immigration (74)	Power (64)	Rich (15)	Tough (26)	Scrap (17)
Traditional (42)	Our (295)	Green (40)	More (180)	For (300)
Of (1035)	Big (30)	Walking (9)	To (1179)	Believe (40)
Foreign (61)	State (41)	Raising (20)	Parents (40)	Unfair (15)

BNP

The BNP categorically differentiates between native and non-native British people and between Christians and individuals of other faiths (POLITICS IS BLOOD and RELIGION). The manifesto outlines plans to improve British living conditions and policies, e.g., we shall restore Britain's fishing industry, for which figurative expressions motivated by BUILDING, e.g., the restoration of our civil liberties, and ENDING schemas, e.g., we shall also end immigration, indicate positive processes to reintroduce traditional British values. The use of JOURNEY metaphors of backwards movement and SEPARATION represents Britain as a self-contained entity, e.g., immediate withdrawal from the European Union, whereas individuals of the Islamic faith should be situated outside of Britain's boundaries, e.g., Islamic immigration to be halted and reversed. British people are also depicted as victims of immigration, e.g., indigenous British people are set to become a minority, and deceptive politics, such as asylum swindle, reinforced by figurative expressions of WAR, e.g., undeclared cultural war against the British people, and DESTRUCTION, e.g., the erosion of British Culture. Immigration is framed as a cause of ecological and political difficulties, e.g., the destruction of Britain's green belt, caused primarily by housing demand fuelled through mass immigration.

The Green Party

The Green Party propose to raise taxes, encourage walking and cycling, use existing resources, e.g., renovation of existing dwellings and end unjust behaviour towards animals and humans, e.g., oppose discrimination (PHYSICAL RESISTANCE). The Greens use figurative language in relation to ecological issues, e.g., renewable energy, to describe energy that is generated from replenishing natural resources, such as wind, rain and sun. The Greens construct an ethical discourse in which the comparative concept of equality/inequality is perceived as a main cause of current political problems, e.g., the rising inequality which has so disfigured our society, whereas more equal societies do better. The keyword rich is a positive example when combined with the lemma equal, e.g., If you had poor parents, you are more likely to become rich in equal societies like Norway; however, a dichotomous discourse emerges in which the rich are presented as greedy and immoral and the poor are depicted as vulnerable and overlooked. Using an inferential chain, rich becomes a

synonym for inequality, which is framed as a disease and ecological hazard, e.g., inequality also makes you ill.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats construct a radical agentic self to address proposed political changes, e.g., only Liberal Democrats will sort out our rotten political system. Political changes are represented by expressions that use figurative language. Figurative expressions include LIVING ORGANISM, e.g., put money into growing businesses, BUILDING, e.g., restore the civil liberties, and CREATION schemas, e.g., create a new route to provide capital. Figurative expressions of PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION and PHYSICAL PROTECTION, e.g., break up the banks...to protect real business, and REMOVAL and REDUCTION, e.g., scrap fees for final year students or cutting back burdensome regulation, represent a positive process to bring about change. The Liberal Democrats construct a religious, e.g., we believe, and ethical framework that differentiates between fair and unfair as a reflection of existing socio-economical dichotomous categories within society that differentiate between the wealthy at the top (i.e., wealth donors and corrupt MPs) and the forgotten concerns of ordinary people, making use of a reversed UP IS GOOD metaphorical schema. The use of the second person pronoun frames potential voters as a central focus and agentic decision makers, e.g., you have an opportunity to shape the future of our country for the better.

Conservative Party

The Conservative Party suggests the formation of a Conservative Government that would lead a Big Society that is given support and responsibilities, e.g., give strong backing or give families more control over their lives. The manifesto constructs a religious discourse, e.g., our belief or we are committed, in which Britain's economy is figuratively depicted as a sick LIVING ORGANISM that requires recovery and growth (ECONOMIC/POLITICAL IMPROVEMENT IS HEALING). Political changes are outlined by the use of BUILDING, e.g., building a new economic model, BATTLE, e.g., fight back against crime, and CREATION schemas, e.g., we will create opportunities. Figurative expressions of PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION, e.g.,

broken society, reflect the emotional effect of the economic crisis and thus are perceived as negative. Conversely, expressions that are perceived as positive are future political changes using SEEING metaphors, e.g., vision for our future or transparent by publishing information. Also other positive expressions are REDUCTION and ENDINGS of expenditures and political decisions, e.g., cut waste in government or we will stop central government, and OPENNESS to services, e.g., to access effective treatments. The Labour Party is depicted as a threat to social and economic welfare, e.g., Labour jobs tax that would kill our economic recovery.

Labour Party

The Labour Party presents themselves as a united group with shared political goals, e.g., we believe. Given the economic crisis and tough times, the Labour Party appeals to society's strength and offers practical care and support, particularly to families and parents, to build a strong and new economic future for an intact society, e.g., Britain is not broken. The focus on the next government uses JOURNEY metaphors with forward movement, e.g., we will drive forward our program, indicating the Labour Party's political commitment, e.g., we will continue to support the economy. Backwards movement, however, is negatively perceived, e.g., slip back into recession. Political changes are suggested by BUILDING, e.g., go on to build a strong economic future or solid foundations, and PHYSICAL PROTECTION metaphors, e.g., we protect frontline services. Conversely, the figurative expression of GROWTH, e.g., sustainable growth, reflects a creative blend of the domains of LIVING ORGANISMS and MACHINES, e.g., the engine of growth. The state systems are personified, e.g., our closed political system had lost touch with people (STATE AS A PERSON). The Tories are perceived as a primary threat to economic recovery, e.g., The Tories would threaten recovery with cuts this year.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study confirm the research hypothesis. Political parties that used a higher frequency of barrier lexis constructed a blame discourse that identified a culpable "bad" other such as that observed in the manifestos of the BNP and Green Party. The manifesto of the Liberal Democrats also categorically differentiated

between fair and unfair political practices as an indirect reflection of socio-economical differences; such an indirect blaming strategy may perhaps be related to an increase of penetration imagery and thus lower defensiveness. The Conservatives and the Labour Party provided a solution-focused discourse without advancing a blameworthy social group; conversely, the Conservatives and Labour Party perceived one another as a threat to economic recovery. Future research should identify under-used keywords and similarities between the political manifestos, as well as exploring figurative language using barrier and penetration imagery.

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Exploring the embodied basis of political discourses and the use of figurative language



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Introduction

- Body boundary imagery in the discursive construction and ideological presentation of the “self/us” and the “other/them” in 5 political manifestos
- Lakoff & Turner (1980) skin boundary predisposes visual in-out orientation
- Chilton (1996) Security metaphors BODY AS A CONTAINER/STATE schema
 - Cognitive categories differentiate between “inside and outside, self and other, friends and aliens” (Chilton 1996, p. 415)



Introduction

- Body boundary imagery scoring system (Fisher & Cleveland 1958)
 - Barrier imagery - protective features (e.g. "high-neck dress")
 - Penetration imagery - permeable features (e.g. "climbing through a window")
- Psychodynamic theories: Coherent self-image, bodily schema acquired in early infant experiences and family environment
 - Instable relations and emotional/physical abuse inhibit body boundary development - too rigid or too permeable boundaries
 - Semiotic processes "the body and mind at the intersection between unconscious language processes" (cf. Freud 1923)
 - Lakoff (2002) Parental punishing versus nurturing attitudes would influence development of political ideology (e.g. Conservatives versus Liberal Democrats)



Aim of this study

- Assess frequencies of body boundary imagery in political manifestos
- Explore body boundary imagery and their figurative use
 - Political manifestos with stronger body boundaries frame "self" as good and "others" as bad and blameworthy of economical problems
 - Political manifestos with lower body boundaries do not enhance self as "good" nor marginalize "bad others" but recognize different social interests



Method

- 5 political manifestos
- BNP, Conservatives, Green Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrats
 - Manifestos divided in 250 word segments
 - Body Type Dictionary (BTD) (Wilson 2006)
- Figurative language
 - MIP (Pragglejaz & Semino 2007)
 - Corpus approach to metaphor identification (Koller et al. 2008)
 - Wmatrix for concordances and discourse fields (Rayson 2008)



Results

- BNP and Green Party have strongest body boundaries
- Liberal Democrats have strong body boundaries but also high penetration imagery (higher permeability/low defensiveness)
- Conservatives and Labour show low barrier imagery and high penetration imagery



Results

- Barrier imagery mostly literal expressions
- Improvement of public services including “house/s”, “universities”, “hospitals”, “prisons” and power “stations”
- Ideology influences improvement plans greatly (e.g. “house”)
 - BNP use nationalistic theme (e.g. “council houses and pensions will only be available to the British people”)
 - Green Party - ecological issues and poverty (e.g. “expand social housing, mainly through conversion and renovation”)
 - Conservatives - general improvements (e.g. “respect the tenures and rents of social housing tenants”)
 - Labour Party - general improvements (e.g. “to develop a new form of affordable housing targeted at working families on modest incomes”)
 - Labour Party and Liberal Democrats use “home” emotional and social connotations versus physical shielding



Results

- Green and BNP use “belt” metaphorically (i.e. “green belt”) - Elongated shape of rural land
- Green and Conservatives - “greenhouse”
ATMOSPHERE AS GLASS BUILDING
 - BNP rejects climate change theory
- Conservatives and Liberal Democrats use “barrier/s” indicating PHYSICAL OBSTACLE that hinders goal achievement
 - “overcome their personal barriers to work”
- BNP and Labour focus on UK’s national “border/s”
 - increased immigration control, cross-border criminal cooperation



Results

- Penetration imagery is frequently used metaphorical
- “Cut/s” FINANCIAL REDUCTIONS
- “Access” OPENNESS to public services
- BNP - “enter” with government and public consciousness as enclosing CONTAINER (e.g. “multiculturalism entered the public consciousness”)
- Green Party - “enter” prevent movement into waste system as CONTAINER
- Conservatives - “entry” regulate policies (e.g. “raise the entry requirement for ...school teacher training...”)
- “Clear” and “transparent” SEEING IS KNOWING by making policies and information understandable to the public



Results

- BNP - most metaphorical use of PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION (e.g. “fractured society” due to multiculturalism)
 - BNP as aggressor “squash the NHS deficit”
- Conservatives - focus on avoidance of damage
 - Society slightly damaged (e.g. “frayed” due to “crime and abuse”)
- Green Party - focus on financial damage (e.g. “crippling debts”)
- Labour Party - society not damaged but vulnerable (e.g. “continue to support the economy while growth is still fragile”)
- Liberal Democrats - damage and repair on moral grounds
 - “Britain’s reputation has been damaged by unscrupulous arms deals”
 - Government as DECAYING “our rotten political system”



Results

- BNP - "British people" are victims of "Muslim" and "immigrants" are perpetrators of economic, social, political and ecological problems
 - "Foreign" = "bad" vs. "Britain as contained bubble" = "good"
- Green Party - "unfair = rich" vs. "fair = poor"
- Liberal Democrats - indirect dichotomies "Fair" vs. "Unfair"
 - "Wealthy donors and corrupt MPs"
- Conservatives - "Big Society" with shared responsibility
- Labour Party - all-inclusive group-reference and journey metaphors (e.g. "we will drive forward")



Conclusion

- Three kinds of political discourse types
 - Direct blame-discourse [BNP and Green Party]
 - Indirect blame-discourse [Liberal Democrats]
 - Low-blame discourse [Conservatives and Labour]
- Level of affect as moderator
 - e.g. [BNP] High Barrier with damage references = Barrier as compensator of bodily weakness
 - Emptying badness out of Britain as a CONTAINER representing a psychological metaphor to relieve negative emotions and reinstall equilibrium



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Thank you very much for your
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